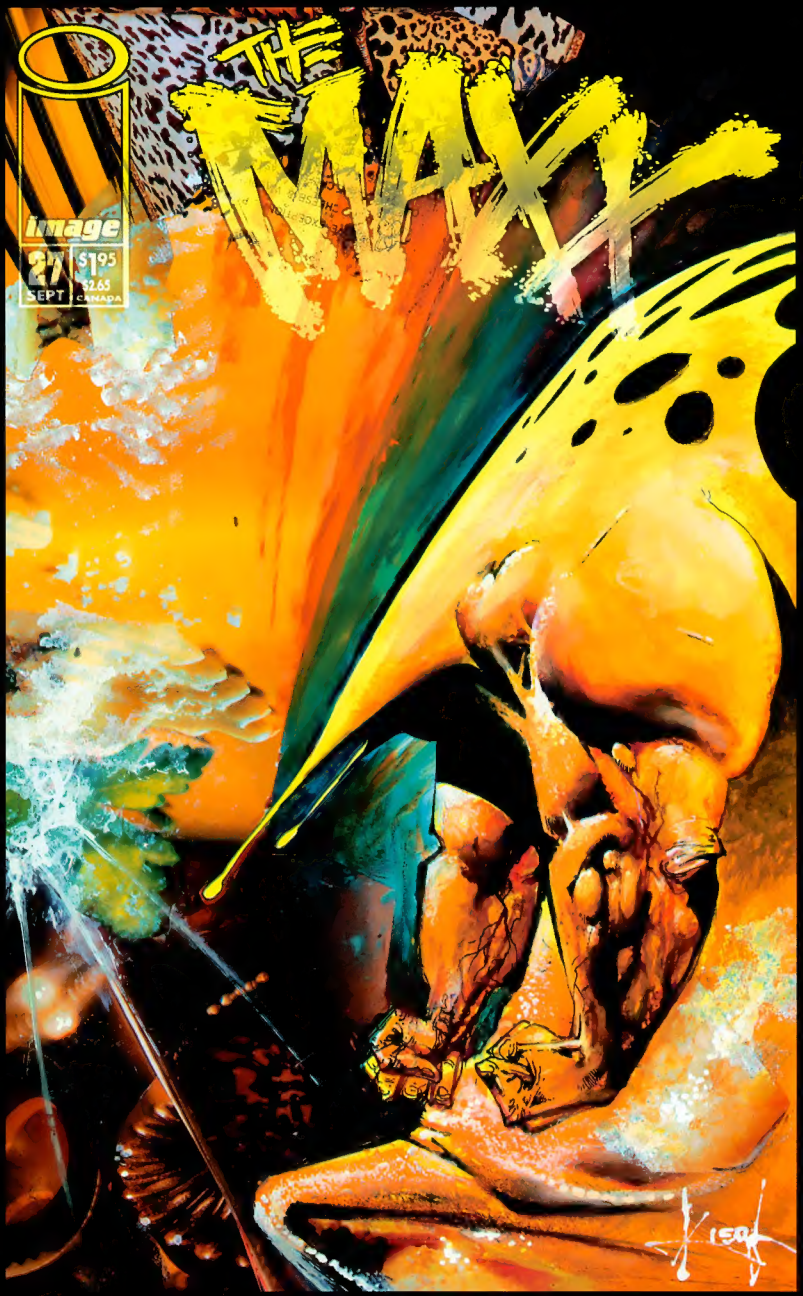
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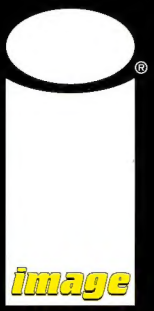


LISTEN, JULIE. THANKS FOR MEETING ME HERE.

NO PROBLEM, "DAVE." THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE STILL CALLING YOURSELF, ISN'T IT?

LOOK, JUST-- DON'T START! YOU THINK I WANTED TO... COME HERE...

FINE. WHATEVER.

LET ME SAVE YOU SOME TIME. *MARK* SENT YOU, DIDN'T HE? I THOUGHT I'D LOST HIM! PROTECTING THAT BOY IS-

PROTECTING? BY *ABANDONING* HIM?

LOOK AT MY HAND...

...NOT VERY PRETTY, IS IT?

BUT THE PROTECTION OF A MOTHER'S YOUNG NEVER IS. IF I HADN'T GIVEN THEM TO THAT *"THING,"* MARK WOULD ALREADY BE *DEAD* NOW.

LISTEN, *MAXX*...

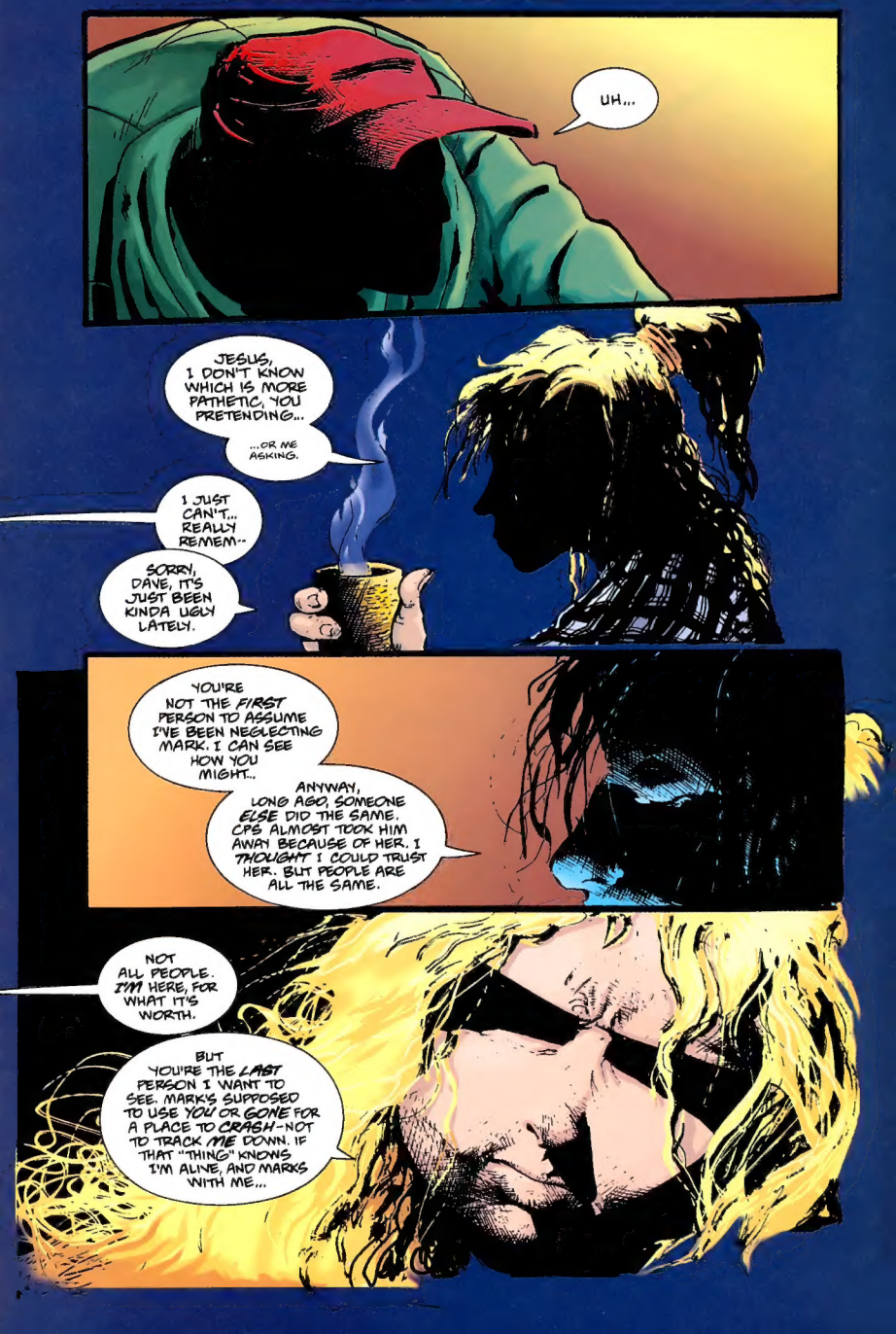
UH... ACTUALLY, THAT'S DA-

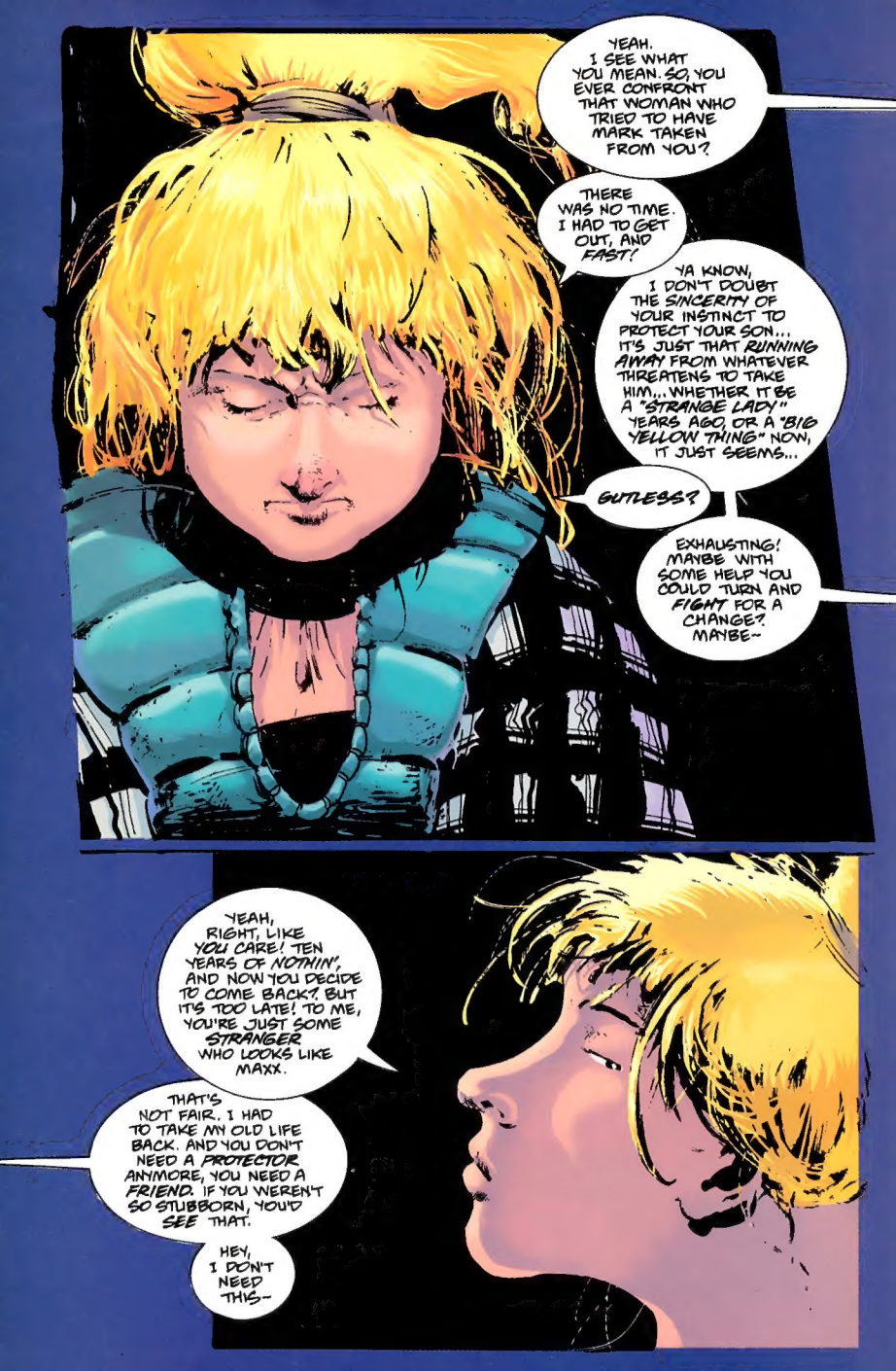
SHUT UP! WHEN YOU GIVE UP PART OF YOURSELF TO SAVE YOUR SON, LOSE EVERYTHING AND EVERY-ONE YOU EVER CARED ABOUT, AND WIND UP LIVING ON THE STREETS TO BOOT, YOU DON'T NEED A G[illegible]ED *DAVE*.

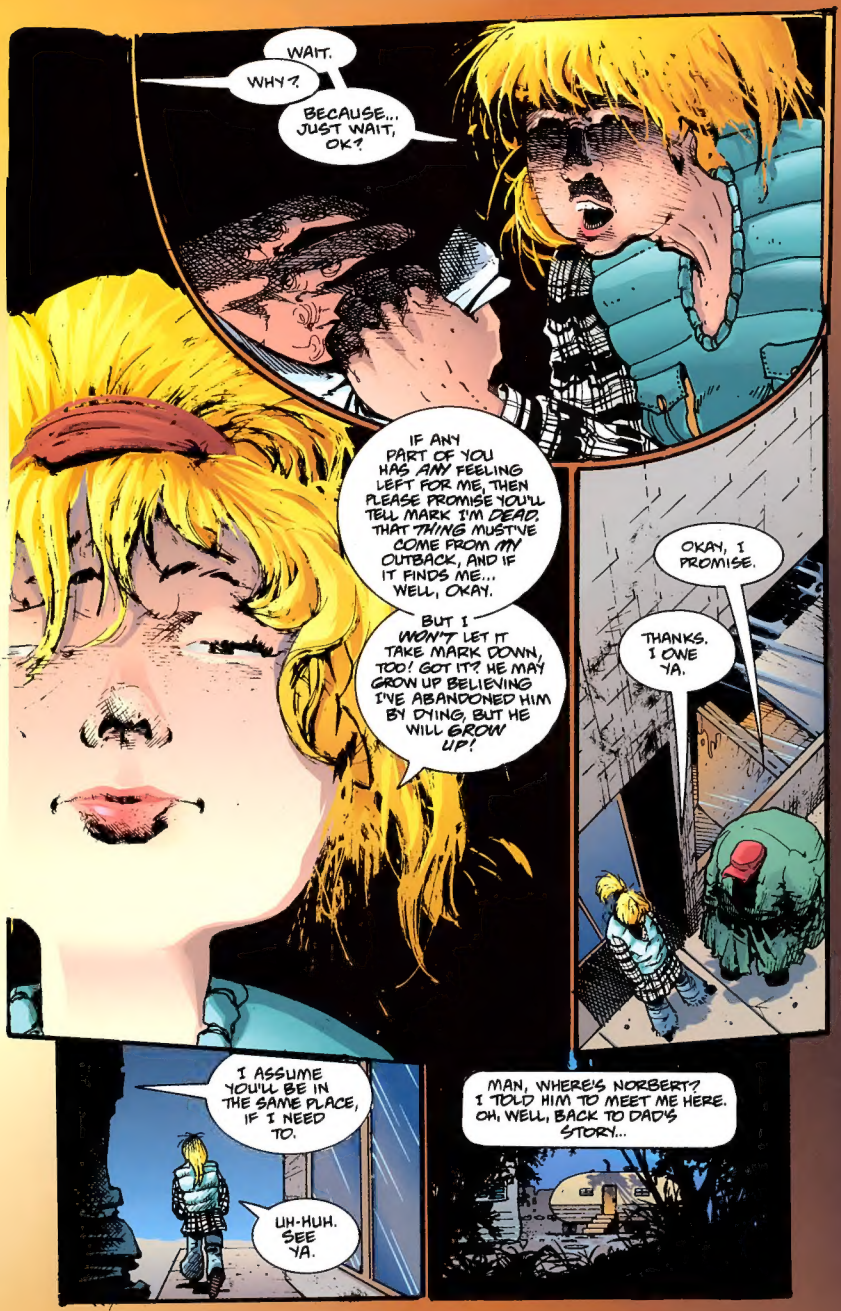
SO IF I WANNA CALL YOU *MAXX* FOR THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES, I *THINK* YOU CAN INDULGE ME...OK?

UH... SURE.

SO TELL ME, WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE MY OUTBACK, "MAXX"?

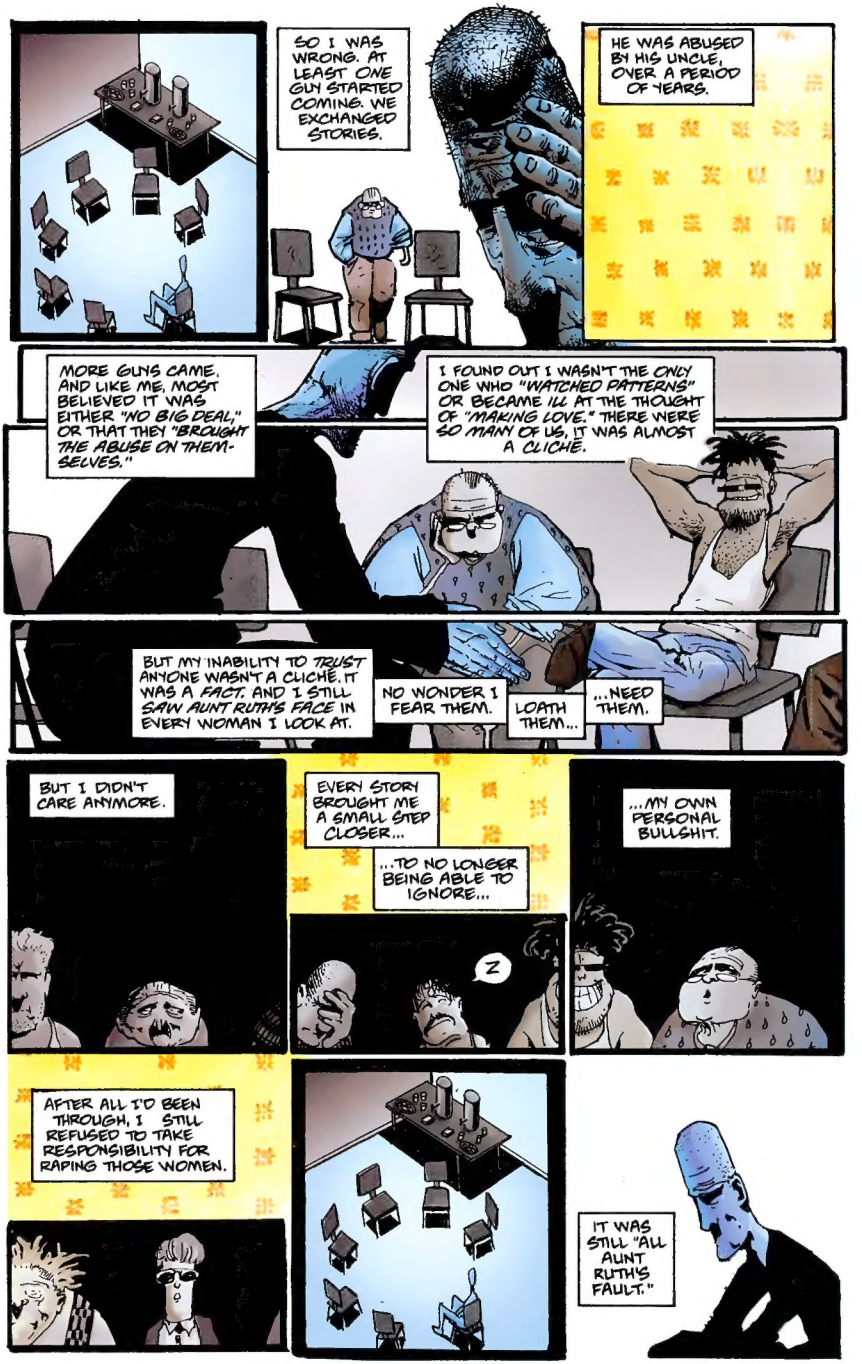

UH...
JESUS, I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS MORE PATHETIC, YOU PRETENDING...
...OR ME ASKING.
I JUST CAN'T... REALLY REMEM--
SORRY, DAVE, IT'S JUST BEEN KINDA UGLY LATELY.
YOU'RE NOT THE *FIRST* PERSON TO ASSUME I'VE BEEN NEGLECTING MARK. I CAN SEE HOW YOU MIGHT..
ANYWAY, LONG AGO, SOMEONE *ELSE* DID THE SAME. CPS ALMOST TOOK HIM AWAY BECAUSE OF HER. I *THOUGHT* I COULD TRUST HER. BUT PEOPLE ARE ALL THE SAME.
NOT ALL PEOPLE. *I'M* HERE, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.
BUT YOU'RE THE *LAST* PERSON I WANT TO SEE. MARK'S SUPPOSED TO USE *YOU* OR *GONE* FOR A PLACE TO *CRASH*--NOT TO TRACK *ME* DOWN. IF THAT "THING" KNOWS I'M ALIVE, AND MARKS WITH ME...

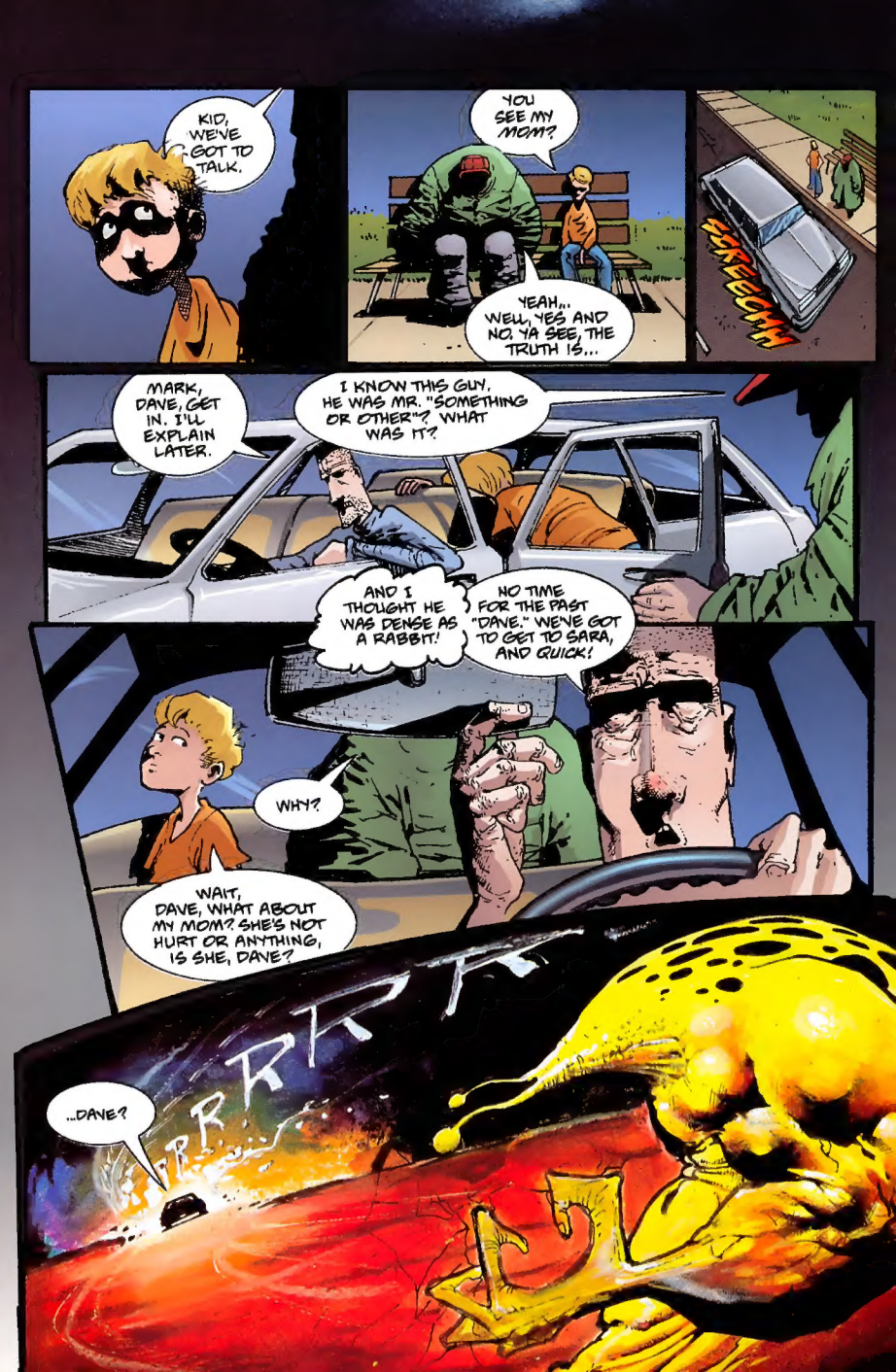

YEAH. I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN. SO, YOU EVER CONFRONT THAT WOMAN WHO TRIED TO HAVE MARK TAKEN FROM YOU?
THERE WAS NO TIME. I HAD TO GET OUT, AND FAST!
YA KNOW, I DON'T DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF YOUR INSTINCT TO PROTECT YOUR SON... IT'S JUST THAT RUNNING AWAY FROM WHATEVER THREATENS TO TAKE HIM... WHETHER IT BE A "STRANGE LADY" YEARS AGO, OR A "BIG YELLOW THING" NOW, IT JUST SEEMS...
GUTLESS?
EXHAUSTING! MAYBE WITH SOME HELP YOU COULD TURN AND FIGHT FOR A CHANGE? MAYBE~
YEAH, RIGHT, LIKE YOU CARE! TEN YEARS OF NOTHIN', AND NOW YOU DECIDE TO COME BACK? BUT IT'S TOO LATE! TO ME, YOU'RE JUST SOME STRANGER WHO LOOKS LIKE MAXX.
THAT'S NOT FAIR. I HAD TO TAKE MY OLD LIFE BACK. AND YOU DON'T NEED A PROTECTOR ANYMORE, YOU NEED A FRIEND. IF YOU WEREN'T SO STUBBORN, YOU'D SEE THAT.
HEY, I DON'T NEED THIS~

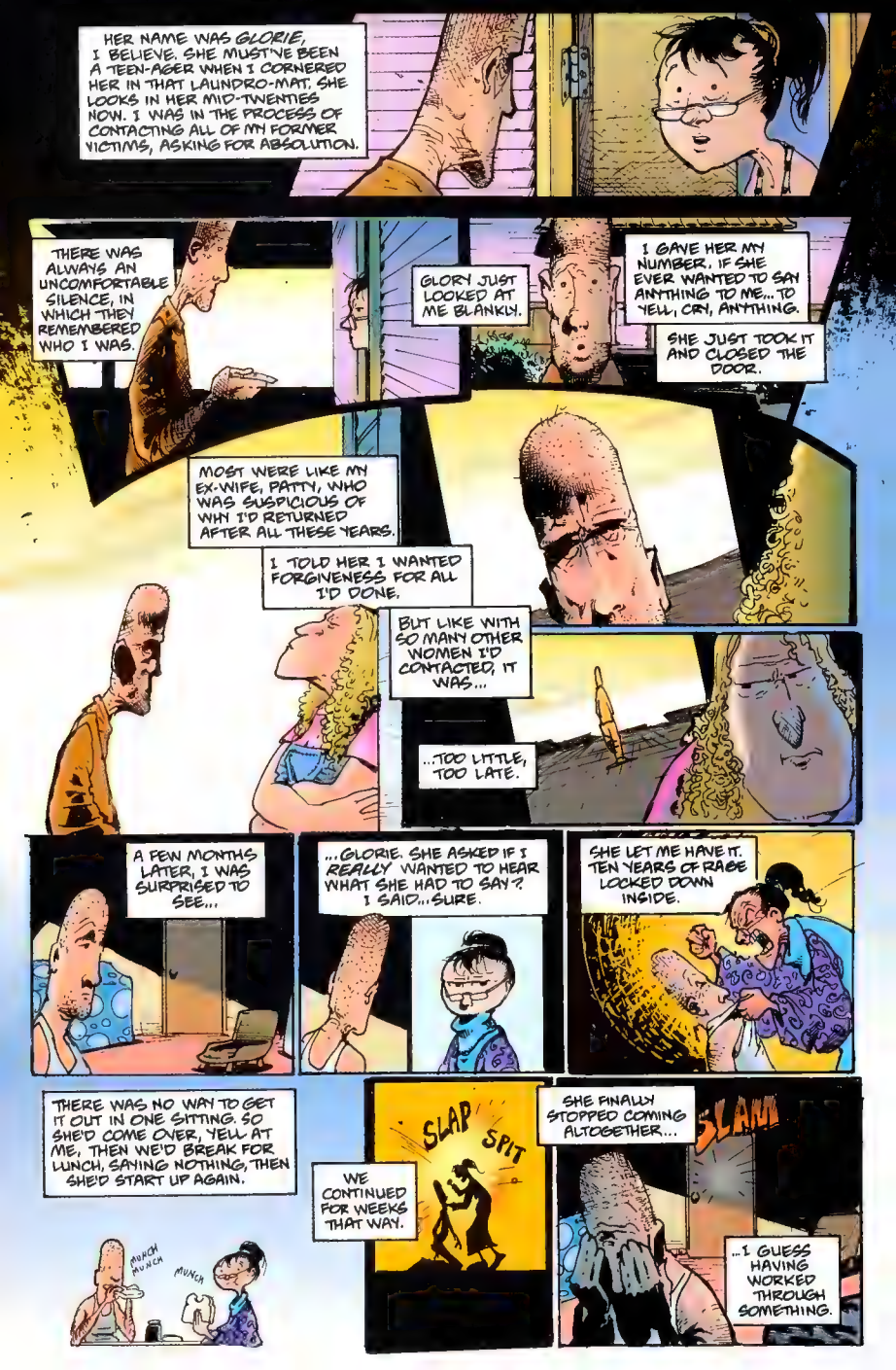

WAIT.
WHY?
BECAUSE... JUST WAIT, OK?
IF ANY PART OF YOU HAS *ANY* FEELING LEFT FOR ME, THEN PLEASE PROMISE YOU'LL TELL MARK I'M *DEAD*. THAT *THING* MUST'VE COME FROM *MY* OUTBACK, AND IF IT FINDS ME... WELL, OKAY.
BUT I *WON'T* LET IT TAKE MARK DOWN, TOO! GOT IT? HE MAY GROW UP BELIEVING I'VE ABANDONED HIM BY DYING, BUT HE WILL *GROW UP!*
OKAY, I PROMISE.
THANKS. I OWE YA.
I ASSUME YOU'LL BE IN THE SAME PLACE, IF I NEED TO.
UH-HUH. SEE YA.
MAN, WHERE'S NORBERT? I TOLD HIM TO MEET ME HERE. OH, WELL, BACK TO DAD'S STORY...

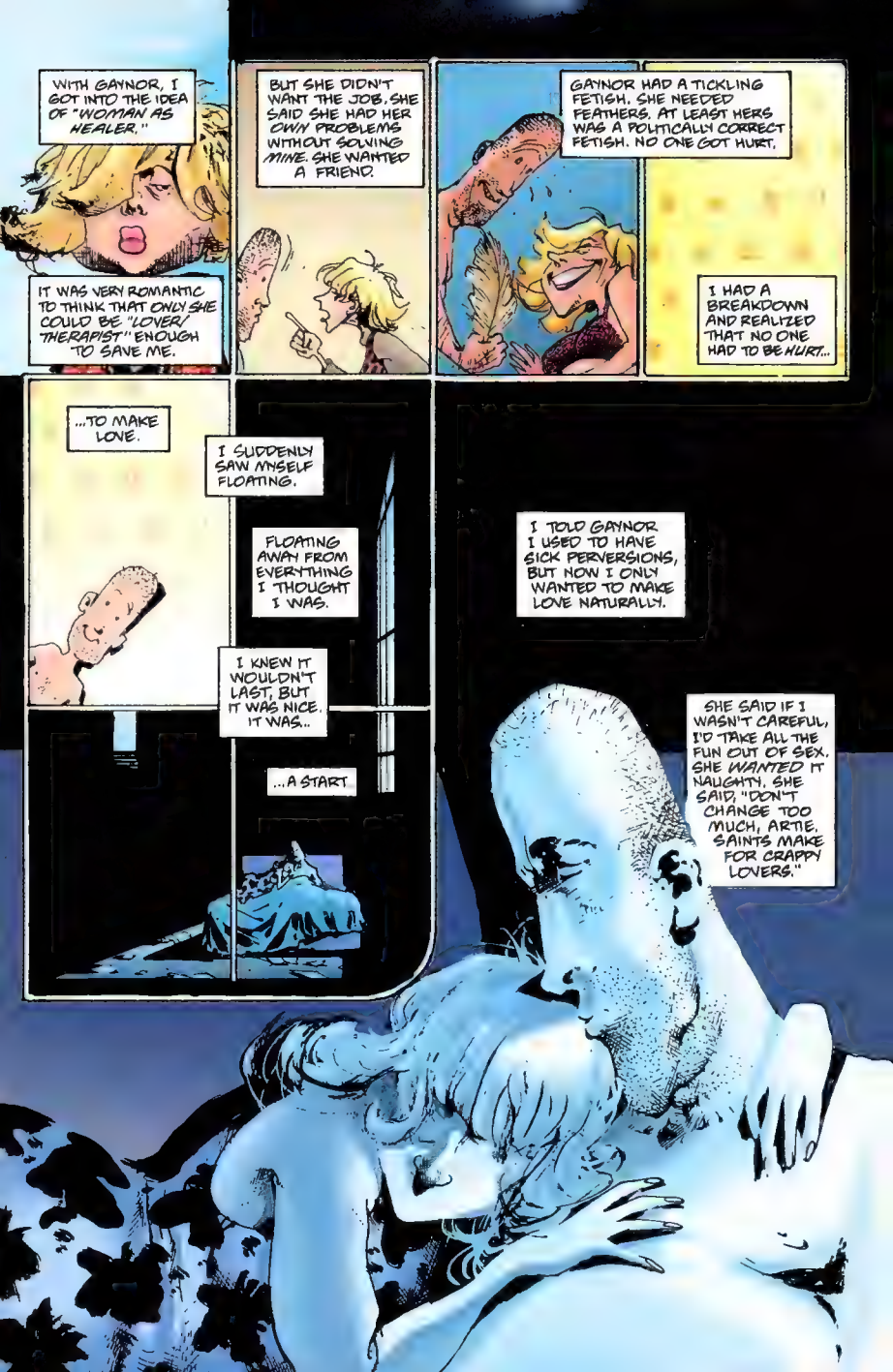
AFTER ALL I REMEMBERED ABOUT HER ABUSE, I STILL MISSED AUNT RUTH.
GO FIGURE. REDEMPTION IS A FUNNY THING.
ONCE I HEARD A GUY CALL INTO A RADIO TALK-SHOW, TELLING OF HIS BEING ABUSED
THE RADIO GAVE A HOT-LINE TO CALL.
BUT I COULDN'T.
CLICK
I WOUND UP GOING TO A SHELTER FOR WOMEN ESCAPING ABUSE. IRONIC, CONSIDERING HOW MANY I PUT THERE.
BECAUSE FEMALE ABUSE OF CHILDREN IS SO RARE, THEY DOUBTED MY STORY. I CAN'T BLAME THEM, THOUGH TO THEM I'M PART OF THE PROBLEM! I ASKED..
SO WHERE DO MEN WHO WERE ABUSED GO TO GET HELP?
A WOMAN WHO ALSO VOLUNTEERED THERE, OVERHEARD AND STOPPED ME ON THE WAY OUT. SHE TURNED OUT TO BE...
...GAYNOR! I INSTANTLY CONNECTED WITH HER. WE MUST'VE TALKED TILL TWO IN THE MORNING. SHE USED TO DATE A MOB BOSS, AND SHE WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY WOMAN WHO'D SEEN MORE GRISLY STUFF THAN ME. SHE WAS ALSO SYMPATHETIC TO ME WITHOUT WANTING TO "FIX" ME.
WE SAW A LOT OF EACH OTHER, AND MY PLUMBING HAD PRETTY MUCH "GIVEN OUT," AND SHE WAS OKAY WITH THAT. SO WAS I, SINCE I WAS SICK OF PAPER BAGS.
BUT THERE WAS STILL EMOTIONAL STUFF. AND ME AND GAYNOR WORKED ON AS MUCH AS WE COULD.

WHEN I TOLD GANNOR EVERTHING I'D DONE AND BEEN THROUGH, I EXPECTED HER TO LEAVE. SHE DIDN'T. I WAS TESTING HER.
I GUESS AFTER LIVING WITH A GANGSTER, SHE DIDN'T SCARE EASILY.
THE CLOSER I'D GET TO HER, THE MORE I'D WANTED TO SLIP BACK INTO MY "OLD PATTERNS."
I REMEMBER THE LAST TIME I TRIED.
I HOPED I COULD JUST CRAWL BACK INTO PUNISHIN AUNT RUTH.
BUT THE ODDEST THING HAPPENED.
ONE MOMENT I WAS STARING AT HER ANGUISHED FACE... THEN I SAW...
...MYSELF.
BEING ABUSED, ALL OVER AGAIN, BY...
...ME.
I LET HER GO, STILL SHAKING... WITH MY REALIZATION.
ALL THOSE YEARS, ALL THOSE WOMEN I'VE BEEN TRYING TO HURT.
SO, ONE NIGHT I WANDERED INTO AN ALLEY, AND FOUND...
...REDEMPTION STARING BACK AT ME.
I BOARDED UP THE FACTORY FULL OF ISZ, AND SAID GOODBYE TO MR. GONE.
PRETTY STUPID, THINKING I COULD JUST WALK AWAY FROM ALL THE PAIN I CAUSED, JUST LIKE THAT, HUH?
BUT THE SINS OF MR. GONE WOULD HAVE TO RETURN TO HAUNT ARTIMIS PENDER, WOULDN'T THEY? YOU CAN'T OUTRUN YOUR OWN SHADOW.
I DECIDED IF NO ONE ELSE WANTED TO HELP GUYS GET THROUGH THIS ABUSE STUFF, THEN MAYBE I SHOULD.
I THINK I'M GONNA START A GROUP FOR OTHER GUYS WHO'VE BEEN ABUSED, ALSO.
THAT'S COOL. I BET A LOT OF GUYS WOULD COME TO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.


SO I WAS WRONG. AT LEAST ONE GUY STARTED COMING. WE EXCHANGED STORIES.
HE WAS ABUSED BY HIS UNCLE, OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS.
MORE GUYS CAME, AND LIKE ME, MOST BELIEVED IT WAS EITHER "NO BIG DEAL," OR THAT THEY "BROUGHT THE ABUSE ON THEMSELVES."
I FOUND OUT I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO "WATCHED PATTERNS" OR BECAME ILL AT THE THOUGHT OF "MAKING LOVE." THERE WERE SO MANY OF US, IT WAS ALMOST A CLICHÉ.
BUT MY INABILITY TO TRUST ANYONE WASN'T A CLICHÉ. IT WAS A FACT. AND I STILL SAW AUNT RUTH'S FACE IN EVERY WOMAN I LOOK AT.
NO WONDER I FEAR THEM.
LOATH THEM...
...NEED THEM.
BUT I DIDN'T CARE ANYMORE.
EVERY STORY BROUGHT ME A SMALL STEP CLOSER...
...TO NO LONGER BEING ABLE TO IGNORE...
Z
...MY OWN PERSONAL BULLSHIT.
AFTER ALL I'D BEEN THROUGH, I STILL REFUSED TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RAPING THOSE WOMEN.
IT WAS STILL "ALL AUNT RUTH'S FAULT."


KID, WE'VE GOT TO TALK.
YOU SEE MY MOM?
YEAH,.. WELL, YES AND NO. YA SEE, THE TRUTH IS...
SCREECH!
MARK, DAVE, GET IN. I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
I KNOW THIS GUY. HE WAS MR. "SOMETHING OR OTHER"? WHAT WAS IT?
AND I THOUGHT HE WAS DENSE AS A RABBIT!
NO TIME FOR THE PAST "DAVE." WE'VE GOT TO GET TO SARA, AND QUICK!
WHY?
WAIT, DAVE, WHAT ABOUT MY MOM? SHE'S NOT HURT OR ANYTHING, IS SHE, DAVE?
...DAVE?

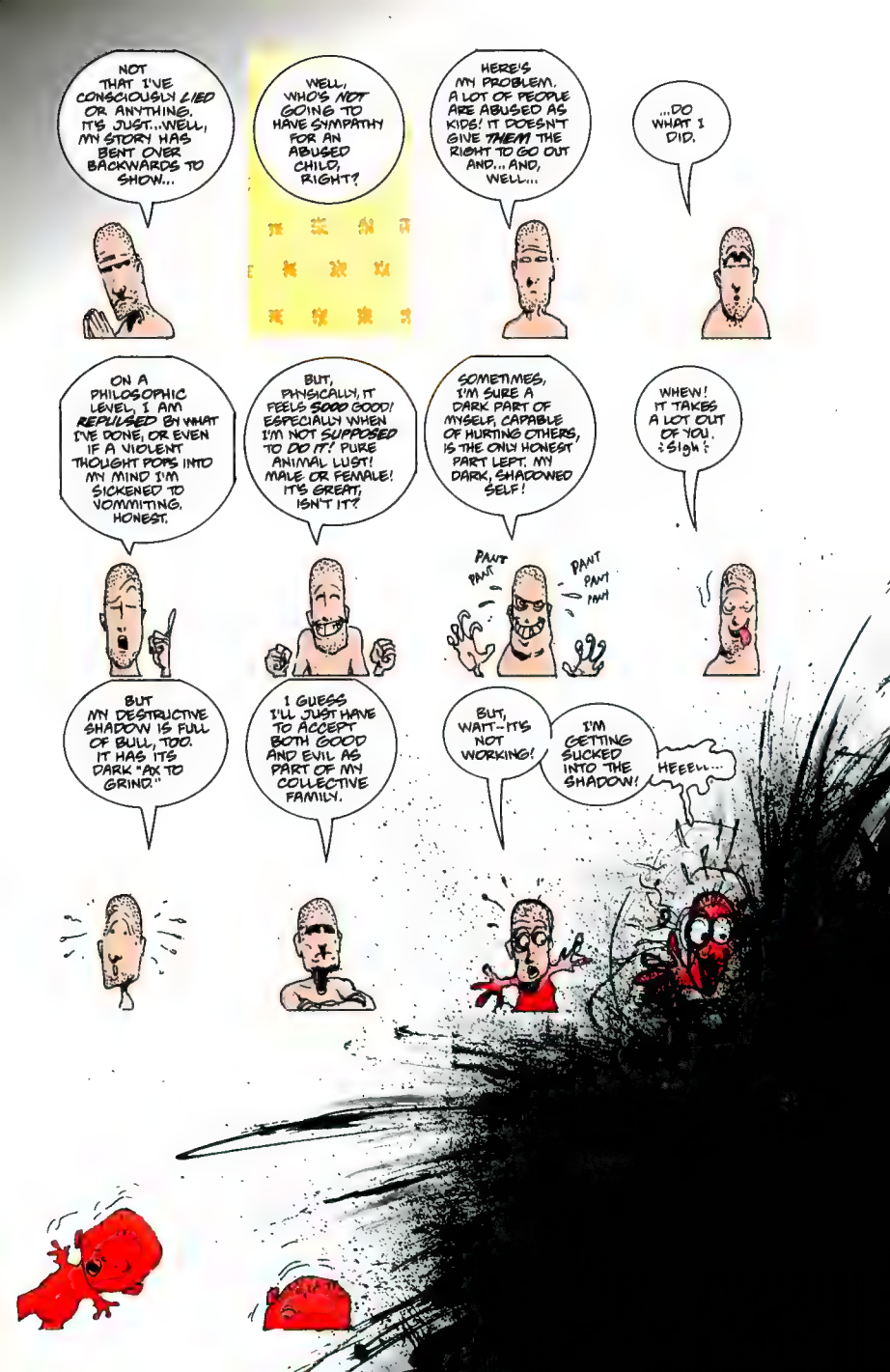

HER NAME WAS GLORIE, I BELIEVE. SHE MUST'VE BEEN A TEEN-AGER WHEN I CORNERED HER IN THAT LAUNDRO-MAT. SHE LOOKS IN HER MID-TWENTIES NOW. I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF CONTACTING ALL OF MY FORMER VICTIMS, ASKING FOR ABSOLUTION.
THERE WAS ALWAYS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE, IN WHICH THEY REMEMBERED WHO I WAS.
GLORY JUST LOOKED AT ME BLANKLY.
I GAVE HER MY NUMBER. IF SHE EVER WANTED TO SAY ANYTHING TO ME... TO YELL, CRY, ANYTHING.
SHE JUST TOOK IT AND CLOSED THE DOOR.
MOST WERE LIKE MY EX-WIFE, PATTY, WHO WAS SUSPICIOUS OF WHY I'D RETURNED AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.
I TOLD HER I WANTED FORGIVENESS FOR ALL I'D DONE.
BUT LIKE WITH SO MANY OTHER WOMEN I'D CONTACTED, IT WAS...
...TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.
A FEW MONTHS LATER, I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE...
...GLORIE. SHE ASKED IF I REALLY WANTED TO HEAR WHAT SHE HAD TO SAY? I SAID...SURE.
SHE LET ME HAVE IT. TEN YEARS OF RAGE LOCKED DOWN INSIDE.
THERE WAS NO WAY TO GET IT OUT IN ONE SITTING. SO SHE'D COME OVER, YELL AT ME, THEN WE'D BREAK FOR LUNCH, SAYING NOTHING, THEN SHE'D START UP AGAIN.
MUNCH MUNCH
MUNCH
SLAP
SPIT
WE CONTINUED FOR WEEKS THAT WAY.
SHE FINALLY STOPPED COMING ALTOGETHER...
SLAM
...I GUESS HAVING WORKED THROUGH SOMETHING.

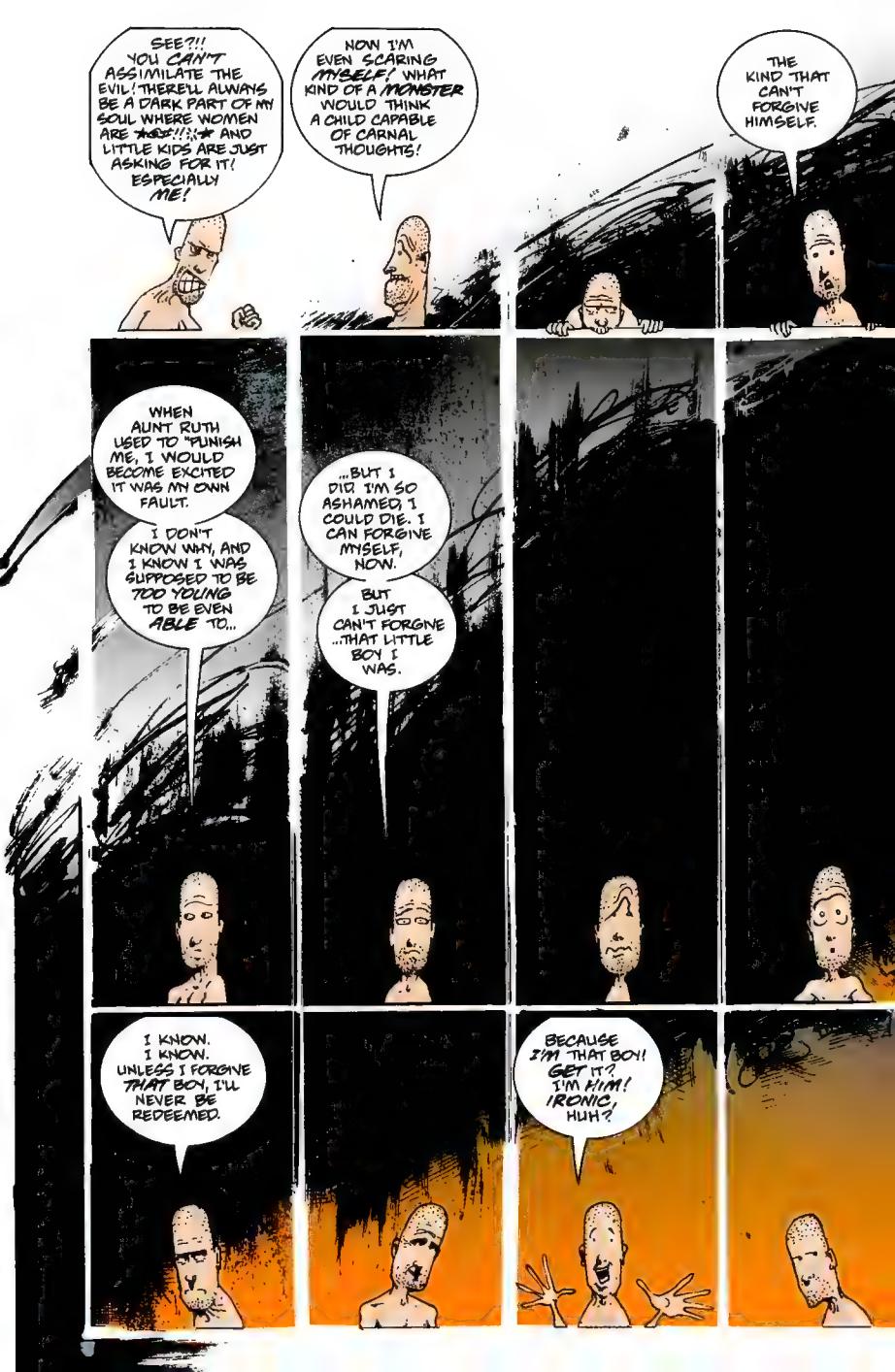

WITH GAYNOR, I GOT INTO THE IDEA OF "WOMAN AS HEALER."
IT WAS VERY ROMANTIC TO THINK THAT ONLY SHE COULD BE "LOVER/THERAPIST" ENOUGH TO SAVE ME.
BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT THE JOB. SHE SAID SHE HAD HER OWN PROBLEMS WITHOUT SOLVING MINE. SHE WANTED A FRIEND.
GAYNOR HAD A TICKLING FETISH. SHE NEEDED FEATHERS. AT LEAST HERS WAS A POLITICALLY CORRECT FETISH. NO ONE GOT HURT.
I HAD A BREAKDOWN AND REALIZED THAT NO ONE HAD TO BE HURT...
...TO MAKE LOVE.
I SUDDENLY SAW MYSELF FLOATING.
FLOATING AWAY FROM EVERYTHING I THOUGHT I WAS.
I KNEW IT WOULDN'T LAST, BUT IT WAS NICE. IT WAS...
...A START.
I TOLD GAYNOR I USED TO HAVE SICK PERVERSIONS, BUT NOW I ONLY WANTED TO MAKE LOVE NATURALLY.
SHE SAID IF I WASN'T CAREFUL, I'D TAKE ALL THE FUN OUT OF SEX. SHE WANTED IT NAUGHTY. SHE SAID, "DON'T CHANGE TOO MUCH, ARTIE. SAINTS MAKE FOR CRAPPY LOVERS."

YEARS LATER, I RETIRED FROM COUNSELING AND MOVED INTO A TRAILER WITH GANNOR. I DID SOME CHECKING AND FOUND OUT MANY OF THE WOMEN I'D ATTACKED...
...HAD BEEN ABUSED AS CHILDREN. I'D VISITED THE OUTBACKS OF THE ADULTS WHO'D ABUSED THEM.
YEARS LATER, WHEN GLORIE SHOWED UP AGAIN, I REALIZED WHY SHED HIT ME SO HARD.
IT WASN'T JUST ME SHE WAS HITTING BACK.
I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE CHOSE ME TO TELL. OR WHY I CAME TO TELL HER THINGS I'VE NEVER TOLD ANY WOMAN. NOT EVEN GANNOR.
YOU KNOW, I THINK ABOUT HIM SOMETIMES, MY DAD.
I KNOW... SAME WITH AUNT RUTH.
I WISH HE WERE HERE RIGHT NOW. I'D PRETEND HE WAS THE SIZE OF THIS WORM.
YEAH? WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
:OUCH: THAT'S GOTTA HURT.
NOT HALF AS MUCH AS WHAT HE PUT ME THROUGH.
AMEN.
TOO BAD IT'S JUST PRETEND, HUH?
YEAH. TOO BAD

SHE WHAT? SHE CAN'T BE DEAD.
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
NEITHER DO I. THE JULIE WINTERS I KNOW WO--
BUTT OUT, PENCIL NECK! THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND THE KID.
LOOK, LET ME SAVE YOU THE SPEECH. MOM PUT YOU UP TO THIS, HUH? SHE'S GOT SOME STUPID THING GOING ABOUT A BIG YELLOW MONSTER THAT SHE'S GOT TO PROTECT ME FROM!
ONLY IT'S JUST ANOTHER EXCUSE TO DITCH ME. SHE ALWAYS FINDS SOME REASON TO TAKE OFF! LITTLE BLUE MEN, THIS, THAT, WHATEVER! SAME OLD CRAZY MOM!! WHY COULDN'T I HAVE A NORM--
HEY! SHE'S TRYING TO PROTECT YOU, MARK! YOU MAY THINK SHE'S TOUCHED--
--BUT SOMETHING MADE HER SCARED ENOUGH TO SEND YOU TO US.

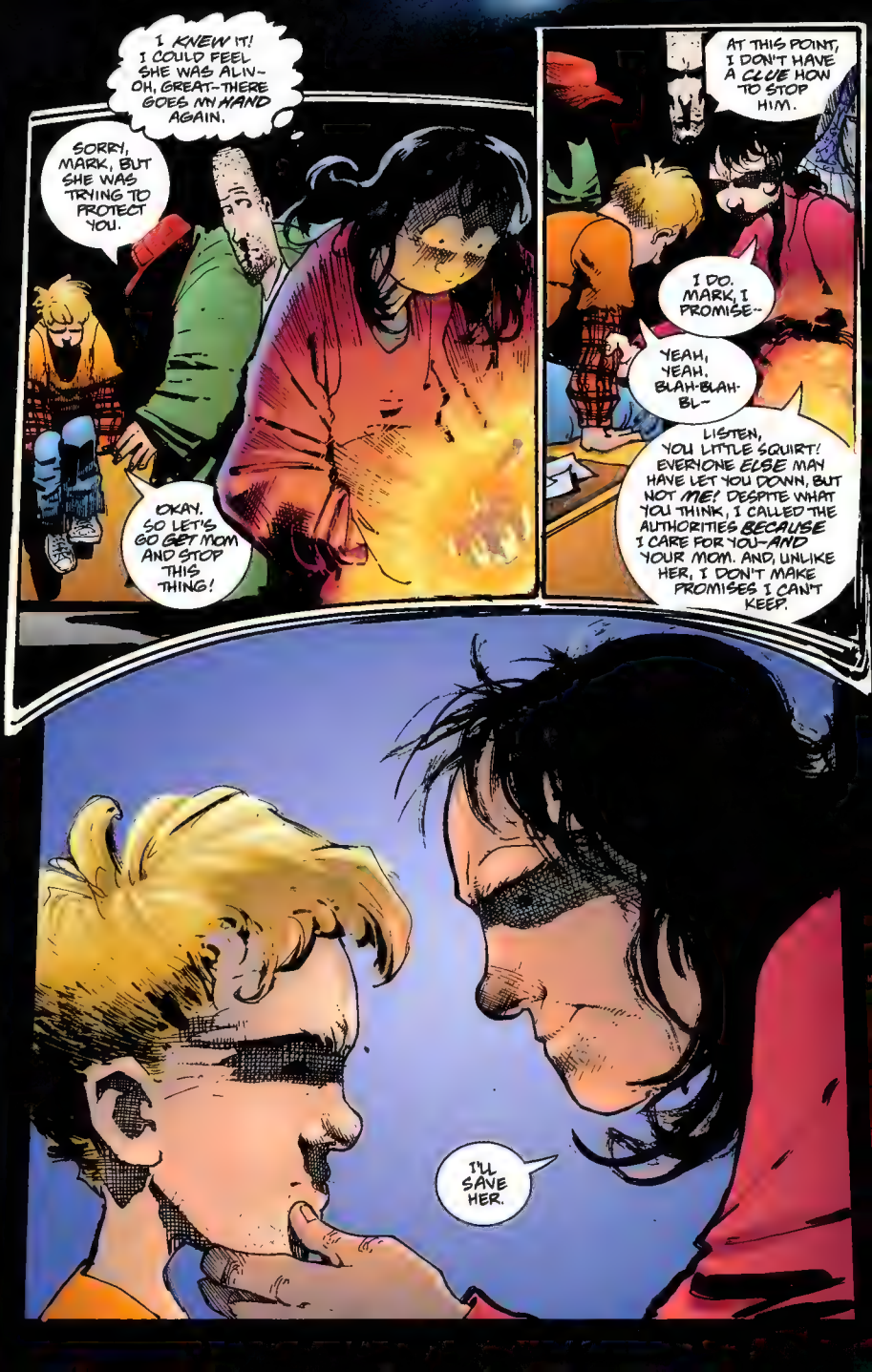
YEAH, SURE. THE FACT SHE'S NUTS.
HANG IN THERE, BUDDY. YOU'LL SEE. SO, DONE, WHERE'D YOU SAY WE'RE GOING, AND WHY THE RUSH?
YOU, "DAVE," ARE THE LEAST IMPORTANT PART OF THE EQUATION, CONSIDERING YOUR LINK WITH JULIE'S BEEN BROKEN AND I OWE YOU NO EXPLANATION OF WHERE WE'RE GOING?
PISSY LITTLE GUY, AIN'T HE?
HOWEVER, I WILL TELL MARK. WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK OF YOUR MOTHER, YOUNG FELLOW, SHE ISN'T CRAZY.
NOT COMPLETELY, ANYWAY.
THERE HAS BEEN SOME-THING WHICH IS KILLING PEOPLE AROUND TOWN! AND YOUR MOTHER IS ON THE LIST! WE HAVE TO GET TO HER BEFORE IT DOES!
BUT WE NEED HELP.
BIG TIME! THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WITH ENOUGH POWER TO HELP US RIGHT NOW--
WHO?
LET'S SEE. GETTING BACK TO OUR LITTLE STORY, OF DADDY TURNING INTO A SWELL GUY WHO JUST HAPPENED TO RAPE WOMEN AND TURN MEN INTO BUGS...
OKAY, SO MAYBE I HAVEN'T BEEN COMPLETELY HONEST.


NOT THAT I'VE CONSCIOUSLY LIED OR ANYTHING. IT'S JUST...WELL, MY STORY HAS BENT OVER BACKWARDS TO SHOW...
WELL, WHO'S NOT GOING TO HAVE SYMPATHY FOR AN ABUSED CHILD, RIGHT?
HERE'S MY PROBLEM. A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE ABUSED AS KIDS! IT DOESN'T GIVE THEM THE RIGHT TO GO OUT AND... AND, WELL...
...DO WHAT I DID.
ON A PHILOSOPHIC LEVEL, I AM REPULSED BY WHAT I'VE DONE, OR EVEN IF A VIOLENT THOUGHT POPS INTO MY MIND I'M SICKENED TO VOMMITING. HONEST.
BUT, PHYSICALLY, IT FEELS SOOO GOOD! ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO DO IT! PURE ANIMAL LUST! MALE OR FEMALE! IT'S GREAT, ISN'T IT?
SOMETIMES, I'M SURE A DARK PART OF MYSELF, CAPABLE OF HURTING OTHERS, IS THE ONLY HONEST PART LEFT. MY DARK, SHADOWED SELF!
WHEW! IT TAKES A LOT OUT OF YOU. :Sigh:
PANT PANT
PANT PANT PANT
BUT MY DESTRUCTIVE SHADOW IS FULL OF BULL, TOO. IT HAS ITS DARK "AX TO GRIND."
I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT BOTH GOOD AND EVIL AS PART OF MY COLLECTIVE FAMILY.
BUT, WAIT--IT'S NOT WORKING!
I'M GETTING SUCKED INTO THE SHADOW!
HEEELL...

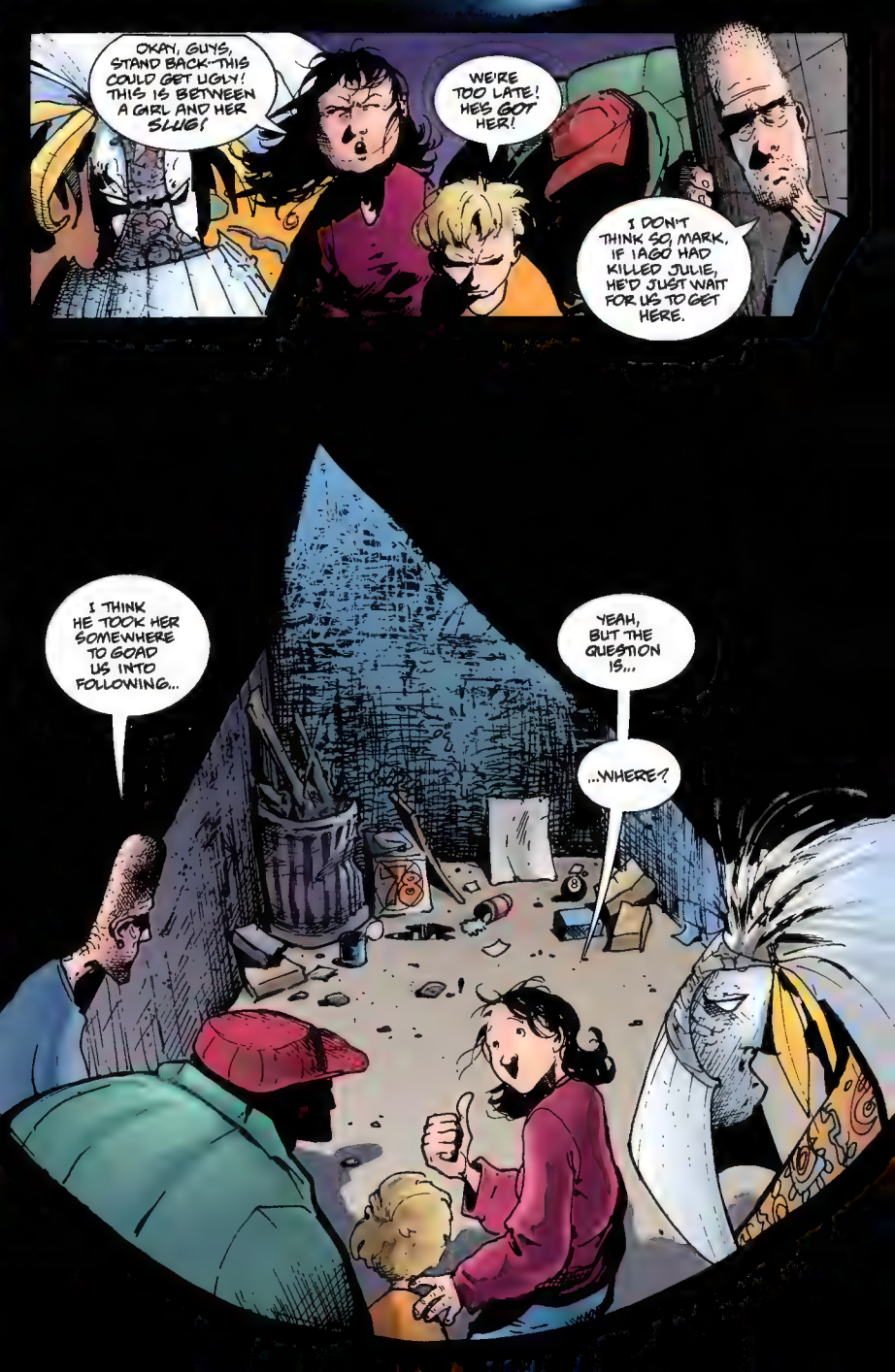

SEE?!! YOU CAN'T ASSIMILATE THE EVIL! THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A DARK PART OF MY SOUL WHERE WOMEN ARE ★@#!!!★ AND LITTLE KIDS ARE JUST ASKING FOR IT! ESPECIALLY ME!
NOW I'M EVEN SCARING MYSELF! WHAT KIND OF A MONSTER WOULD THINK A CHILD CAPABLE OF CARNAL THOUGHTS!
THE KIND THAT CAN'T FORGIVE HIMSELF.
WHEN AUNT RUTH USED TO "PUNISH ME, I WOULD BECOME EXCITED IT WAS MY OWN FAULT.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, AND I KNOW I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TOO YOUNG TO BE EVEN ABLE TO...
...BUT I DID. I'M SO ASHAMED, I COULD DIE. I CAN FORGIVE MYSELF, NOW.
BUT I JUST CAN'T FORGIVE ...THAT LITTLE BOY I WAS.
I KNOW. I KNOW. UNLESS I FORGIVE THAT BOY, I'LL NEVER BE REDEEMED.
BECAUSE I'M THAT BOY! GET IT? I'M HIM! IRONIC, HUH?

JUST REMEMBER SARA, REDEMPTION IS NOT FOR WHIMPS.
GEEZ, NORBERT, WHERE WERE YOU?
SORRY, THE YELLOW PAINT I USED ON MY MASK KEEPS FADING.
WHAT DOES "REDEMPTION FOR WHIMPS" MEAN?
NEVER MIND. I GOT A MESSAGE THAT GONE WANTED US TO MEET HIM HERE. IN FACT, HE SHOULD BE--
clik
I CAN'T BELIEVE I USED TO DRESS LIKE THIS GUY.
SARA, THIS IS MARK WINTERS. HIS MOTHER SENT HIM HERE FOR HELP IN STOPPING IAGO.
WHAT EE-AUG-OH ?
HI, MARK. HELLO, MAXX.
HI.
NOT YOU, STUPID.

WHICH IS?
THIS IS NO JOKE, SARA. WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IT OR NOT, EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED UP TO THIS POINT, MOVING OBJECTS, OPENING FAERIES FOR CLUES, ALL TEST STRENGTHENING YOU FOR THIS TASK
KICK BIG UGLY'S ASS!
SARA, EVEN IF YOU'RE TOO LATE TO MAKE AMENDS WITH JULIE, THEN PERHAPS... FOR HER SON?
YOU'RE THE FOCAL POINT, SARA. THE FAIRIES. IAGO. YOUR MAXX. ITS JUST THIS ONE PART HAS GROWN OUT OF CONTROL AND THREATENS TO DESTROY EVERYTHING OVER HERE--
WAIT-- LET ME GUESS. UNLESS I DEAL WITH IT OVER THERE? IN MY SUPPOSED OUTBACK?
FORGET IT. WHO NEEDS HER? I KNOW THIS SARA'S THE ONE--
--WHO TRIED TO HAVE ME TAKEN FROM MOM WHEN I WAS LITTLE.
BESIDES, IT'S TOO LATE. MOM'S DEAD.
WELL, ACTUALLY... NO, SHE'S NOT.


I KNEW IT! I COULD FEEL SHE WAS ALIV~ OH, GREAT--THERE GOES MY HAND AGAIN.
SORRY, MARK, BUT SHE WAS TRYING TO PROTECT YOU.
OKAY. SO LET'S GO GET MOM AND STOP THIS THING!
AT THIS POINT, I DON'T HAVE A CLUE HOW TO STOP HIM.
I DO, MARK, I PROMISE--
YEAH, YEAH, BLAH-BLAH-BL~
LISTEN, YOU LITTLE SQUIRT! EVERYONE ELSE MAY HAVE LET YOU DOWN, BUT NOT ME! DESPITE WHAT YOU THINK, I CALLED THE AUTHORITIES BECAUSE I CARE FOR YOU--AND YOUR MOM. AND, UNLIKE HER, I DON'T MAKE PROMISES I CAN'T KEEP.
I'LL SAVE HER.

IT'S COMING FOR ME. AS I KNEW IT WOULD. AT LEAST MARK WILL BE SPARED. DAVE WILL WATCH HIM. I KNEW THERE WAS SOME "MAXX" LEFT IN DAVE.
FUNNY, I THOUGHT I'D BE MORE FRIGHTENED, NOW THAT I'M ABOUT TO... TO...
NOT TIME TO DIE YET! HERE'S A THOUGHT. TIME TO RETURN TO DREAMTIME! LOVE SWEET JULIE.
WHOOOSH!
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS THE PLACE, MAXX?
THAT, DAVE, AND YES, SHE SAID TO MEET HER HERE!

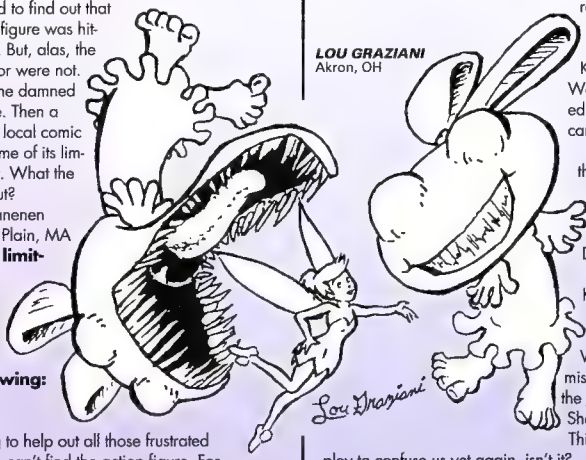

OKAY, GUYS, STAND BACK--THIS COULD GET UGLY! THIS IS BETWEEN A GIRL AND HER SLUG!
WE'RE TOO LATE! HE'S GOT HER!
I DON'T THINK SO, MARK, IF IAGO HAD KILLED JULIE, HE'D JUST WAIT FOR US TO GET HERE.
I THINK HE TOOK HER SOMEWHERE TO GOAD US INTO FOLLOWING...
YEAH, BUT THE QUESTION IS...
...WHERE?

Dear Sam,

I was thrilled to find out that a Maxx action figure was hitting the market. But, alas, the fruits of my labor were not. I couldn't find the damned thing anywhere. Then a gentleman at a local comic store informed me of its limited availability. What the hell is that about?

John Paanenen
Jamaica Plain, MA

Yep, they're limited, all right (like us). It's time for creative solutions, like the following:



Dear Sam,

I am writing to help out all those frustrated Maxx fans who can't find the action figure. For months I was just as upset about the lack of Maxx toys in my local toy and comic shops. Then I went on the Internet. There are hundreds of collectors just waiting to sell their Maxx action figures (or just about anything else you can think of). Anyway, now I've got my own plastic Maxx, and I'm happy as a clam.

Another loyal Maxxhead,
Joe Daily
Bala Cynwyd, PA

SOME FOLKS HAD MILD QUIBBLES ABOUT JULIE DYING:

Sam you idiot,

What the #%@***& are you

Ooops—better not print that one...

Dear Sam "out of control" Kieth,

I picked up ish 25 w/a feeling of confidence. For the first time I was one step ahead of you; I had you all figured out! Sara and Maxx were going to save Julie and Steve while working out their emotional problems, somehow. So I read through it real fast (looking for Julie). Too fast, evidently, because I didn't really see the names of the dead people. Then Sara crumpled and threw down the list. I went back to see what could cause such a reaction...MY GOLLY GOSH...YOU KILLED OFF JULIE!! Wow...never expected that. Oh well, can't quit now.

LOU GRAZIANI
Akron, OH

More of a slave than a reader,
Ray Girouard
Berwick, ME

Dear Sam Kieth,

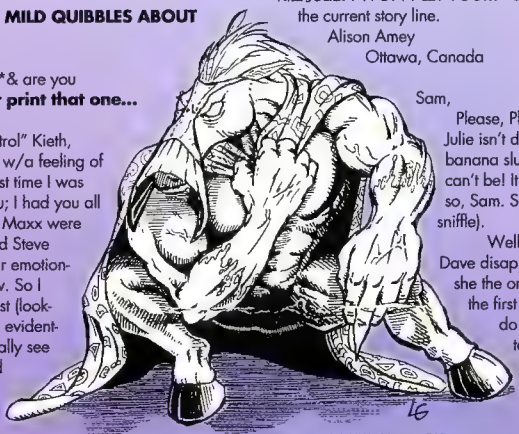
Ahem. YOU KILLED JULIE?! What the HELL WERE YO THINKING?!..... Wait. I get it. It's a mistake, right? It's not the same Julie Winters. She's different, right? This is just some clever ploy to confuse us yet again, isn't it?

Sincerely,
Emily Horenian
Dedham, MA

Dear Sam (if that is your real name),

I've never written to an author before. In fact, I rarely write letters at all. You will therefore appreciate the gravity of the situation necessary to force me to write (and send) a letter. I'm sure that I'm not alone in saying "YOU CAN"T KILL JULIE! I WON'T LET YOU!!!" Other than that, I love the current story line.

Alison Amey
Ottawa, Canada



LOU GRAZIANI, Akron, OH

Sam,

Please, Please, PLEASE! Tell me Julie isn't dead! Tell me that big banana slug didn't kill her. It can't be! It just can't! Say it ain't so, Sam. Say it ain't so (sniffle, sniffle).

Well, if Julie is dead, would Dave disappear eventually? Isn't she the only reason he exists in the first place? If not, where do you think you might take this? (Besides, Mark needs somebody to take care of him.)

Erica Gaspard
Orange, TX

Dear Sam,

Is Julie really dead or is this another of those things where you just make everyone think someone's dead when they're not? Like maybe Iago almost killed her but he only got her hand so, like, we'll see her in a couple of issues going around with a hook or a fork or something for a hand? Or maybe there's another person with the same name? Or for once could someone REALLY be dead? I wanna know.

Talia Felix
Santa Fe, NM

Dear Sam,

What's up with the fingerprint? Am I to believe Julie Winters is dead? I hope not. I wanted to see what she looked like ten years later. Plus, I think Iago's a sissy. A real killer banana slug would murder its victims itself. Evidently, Iago stole Vincent Vega's corpse after Butch Coolidge shot him. Killer slug my foot! Keep up the good work.

Shields Barrett
Hudson, OH

As you now know, of course she isn't dead. And she wasn't dead before I got these letters, even. Honest.

Sam,

How come the truth didn't seem to help Julie? I mean, after all she went through, her life was still messed up. What's the deal?

Peace, love, and granola,
Chris Curran
Toledo, OH

Hey—Julie's Outback may be healing inside, but that doesn't mean she's gonna stop bitching outside (I know I haven't...)

W/all this carping about Julie, what about Gone?

Dear Sam,

You asked about Gone's possibly not being an evil fellow after all. So here are my thoughts: It seems to me that one of the cool premises of The Maxx is that reality depends on the perceiver. The fact that everybody has a different Outback, for example. Another part of this is how, in some ways, the Outback is more real than the city.

So Gone did do all those horrible things, and Artie Pender did not. And yet they are the same. There is no need to explain it more than that, I think.

Rachel English
Bellingham, WA

Dear Sam,

I can believe that Artie Pender is an okay guy and Sara is being paranoid about him, but Mr. Gone was a total bastard and should remain so. But I think I see a way out of this... Artie was telling the complete truth. Mr. Gone was a mental projection of his; he was a tulpa.

Tulpas are, like, external projections of personality from the soul, based on Indian legends. They appear to be real people to everyone else, but they're really created by several weeks of hard thinking about what sort of person you want to make, after which you have your own little helper.

The catch in all of this is that no matter how good and selfless you make your tulpa, they have a nasty habit of changing to reflect the less savory aspects of your nature, or even the subconscious fears of others. And the longer you leave them, the more independence they gain. So leave a tulpa alone for a month or two, and you end up with the original Monsters From the ID scenario.

Cheers,
Will Sargent
San Francisco, CA

These letters came in after Issue 25. I wonder what these folks (and you) think after reading this ish!

TO: The Creative Team Behind The MAXX,

Is there a collected volume of The Maxx? I am not a "collector" in the sense that I pile comics up in hopes of making money; I collect to read and enjoy. My local shop has all the back issues but the prices are too steep. The greasy fanboy at my local shop won't help me—he just tries to sell me Spawn and X-Men.

Thank you from a new Mxhd,
Zachary Trover
Billings, MT

Yes—there is a Mx TPB (trade paperback) that includes issues 1-6. AND, an issue 7-12 TPB is due out soon, plus we'll keep collecting and

releasing them that way. Or try Head-to-Head—I notice a lot of folks want to dump their old Maxxes CHEEP.

Dear Sam,
I had this great idea: a Maxx chess game! Here are the figures I have:
WHITE:
Pawns- White isz
Rook- Leopard Queen's fortress
Bishop- Sara
Knight- Maxx
Queen- Leopard Queen
King- Julie
BLACK:
Pawns- Black isz
Rook- An Air Whale
Bishop- Dicant
Knight- Emwitabway or Ret'Qark'n
Queen- Mr. Gone

Keep me wanting more,
Alex Campos
Houston, TX

Cool.

Sam,
I've never written to a comic before. I once stalked Howie Mandel but that's another story. After reading ish 5 I had to write. Frankly, I've become fed up with those who trash Norbert. I like him even more than Dave. Ow! I guess I shouldn't say that around these parts. Mayhaps it's because I'm a Horse on the Chinese calendar. Or it's possible that I adore Norbert because he has such style. Case in point: a mask made of old garbage and banana peels instead of feathers. What panache. It brings a tear to this Bone Gnawer's eyes. And the quilt as a cape. I thought I was the only person who did that. I am not alone anymore! (And the guys at the supermarket laughed…)

Which brings me to another thing. Norbert definitely knows how to shop. I would have used the squirt guns for different purposes however. And the shot of Norbert hunched over dissected fairies while clutching a butter knife in the kitchen. I wish I could have that much fun. Usually I just chuck burritos at my dogs. Although I can't remember my score at the moment.

So there you have it. Someone totally satisfied with the "new" Maxx. Okay, maybe totally was the wrong word. Where are the bellbottoms? And when will we see Maxx inside Sara's Outback?

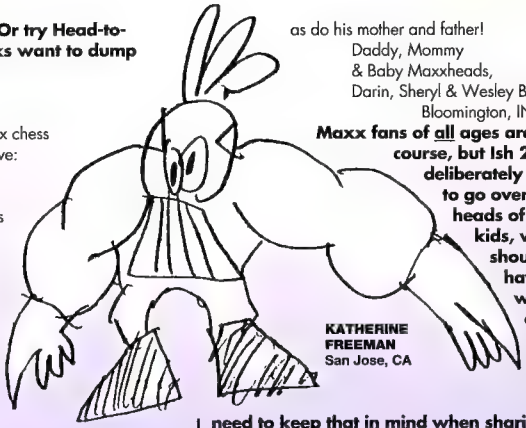
Yours falsely,
The Smiling Burrito
Aztec, NM

Burritos at your dogs?

Dear Sam,
Sorry to disappoint both Austin and Phillip, but my son Wesley is your youngest fan! He got into Maxx when he was two years old (he's 3 now)!! He loves both the comics and the cartoons, as do his mother and father!

Daddy, Mommy
& Baby Maxxheads,
Darin, Sheryl & Wesley Bagley
Bloomington, IN

Maxx fans of <u>all</u> ages are cool of course, but Ish 26-27 are deliberately written to go over the heads of little kids, who shouldn't have to worry about such things. Older readers need to keep that in mind when sharing these issues.



KATHERINE FREEMAN
San Jose, CA

Sam and Co.,
The recent Maxx issues (the ones I've been able to find!) have only been getting better, and Friends of Maxx was especially good, because it felt more like a really good short story with pictures than a comic.

Mike Cecconi
Little Falls, NY

Thanks! Friends of Maxx #2 (Broadminded) will be out in November. Check it out.

Salutations,
I'm not writing this letter to comment on your fine book this time but to thank you so very much for your Head-to-Head column. Because of this service you do for us fans, I have met a few friends I wouldn't have met otherwise, and one incredibly special woman in particular. Her name is Jeanette and she wrote to me from an ad I placed in the penpals section, and we wrote for a while, then began talking on the phone. We met for the first time after like six months or so at the San Diego Comic Con this year. Jeanette is a wonderful woman, gorgeous, fun to be with and I love her. I think she feels the same, and while she lives several states away, we are currently talking about moving closer to each other to get to know each other better on an everyday basis.

If it weren't for your book and there being a Head-to-Head, I probably would never have met her (or any of the other friends I made), and I just wanted to thank everyone involved for this.

Thanks.

Sincerely,
R.J. Spassov
Bolivar, OH

Great, because Head-to-Head was <u>meant</u> to hook up folks just like you say. Thanks for letting us know about your

MICAH WIGGINS, Englewood, FL

success!! And good luck.

You may have noticed that last month we made a big deal about penpal people using post office boxes or e-mail instead of personal addresses and phone numbers, but this month we printed penpals with personal addresses. Why? Because we piled up a buncha penpal submissions, all of which would have to be resubmitted etc. etc. So we're putting the pobox thing off an issue. But we're serious: NEXT ISSUE (#28), penpals will have to use e-mail or POBox numbers.

Sam Kieth,

The Maxx is great. But let me just say one thing to most of the people who write into Maxx Traxx. All I've been reading in Maxx Traxx is about how bad your life is and how troubled you are. That kind of talk is all too typical nowadays and I'm getting sick of it. Yes, I'm sure your life is sooo much like the storyline, but that's a kind of comparison anyone can make. How 'bout a few letters w/something good to say.

Tony
Worcester, MA

Dear Sam,

The Maxx is great, somehow touching something inside so that I feel kind of exposed after reading an issue. It's as though something's revealed inside of me. I guess that must be how it feels to be psychoanalyzed.

The letters pages are great too. It's nice to see that you don't mind printing what people write about their feelings instead of just what they think of your artwork.

I just reread a whole bunch of back issues and it made me pause for thought. My life hasn't exactly been conventional so far, and a lot of people down the road have called me weird just cause I was a little different. There were times when I kind of liked the idea and revelled in my weirdness. I told everyone that I was, and didn't object if they labelled me as such. (I notice a lot of Mxhds do the same.) After a while it starts to wear you down though. After a while you've built such a wall between you and so-called normal people that you can't escape. What started as fun becomes a pigeon hole you can't climb out of.

Each of us strives to live the life we want to, to be the people we are inside; but there is also a need in every one of us to be liked and loved. I always feel as though I'm selling out if I try to fit in by consciously subduing my individuality, and I am, in a way. Sometimes though, you need to ask yourself how much you need love and respect in order to be happy. I don't think forming ever-growing bands of self-proclaimed weirdos is the answer in the end.

I don't call myself weird anymore, and I don't let others tell me I am, but I still try to live the way I always have. Only the name has changed. Now I'm an undercover weird agent. (Course you're probably thinking, "Who is this weirdo?")

I'd like to know what you guys think.

Tim Garton
Windmill Hill Farm
Stoulton, Worcestershire, England

Dear Sam,

I really love The Maxx. When I watched the show on MTV, I felt it was like me and my sister (The Maxx and Julie). My sister and I both have a co-dependent relationship, but my sister left me to go to college (like in the Oddities version on MTV). And I was stubborn like The Maxx. Didn't say much. After that, I had to find out how life was after she left. It was really hard. Especially since I was getting stomachaches all the time.

But I survived. Now I have to move to California with my Dad and leave Illinois. So I guess it's my turn to go to my Outback (California).

Thanxx,
Jeff Stahler
Illinois

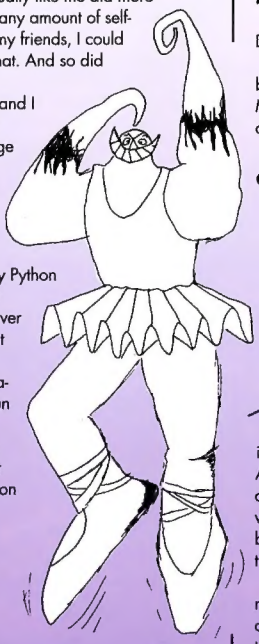
Sounds like a helluva year. But you survived, as have others before you, even in California! Read on.

Dear Sam,

In case this letter actually gets printed (yeah, right), I want to say something to all the Mxhds out there that have writ-

with being "losers" and "misfits." Just hang in there guys, it does get better. I was a "geek" throughout middle and high school because I got good grades and was overweight and like Star Trek, D&D, computers (insert your favorite "uncool" hobby here). I didn't have many friends at all and got beat up a lot (mentally and emotionally more than physically). I kept trying to be cool and act cool, without realizing that being "cool" is being yourself, no matter how "weird" or "demented" that is. When I had just about resigned myself to being a geek forever, I started making friends. Friends that were just like me. The fact that someone could actually like me did more for my self-esteem than any amount of self-pity. When I was with my friends, I could be myself, and I liked that. And so did they.

Now I'm in college and I have a loving group of friends, both from college and back home who take me for what I am. So, what I'm trying to say is: watch Star Wars, read The Maxx, and quote Monty Python in social situations, and play Magic, and whatever else it is that you do that people laugh at, and ENJOY IT. You're probably having a lot more fun doing it than they are making fun of it. Things will get better. Not right away, of course, but soon enough.



Meep.
Ron L.
New York, NY

Well said.

Sara got some action. (Letter-wise.)

O godlike Sam,

Back in ish 21, you asked what Sara should be in her adult Outback. I'm sure you've already considered this, but wouldn't the obvious choice be a...um...well...a fairy? Think about it. First, the connection to the exploding fairies: if Sara were the "fairy princess" in the Outback, the exploding fairies would be, like, her servants, or something. Second, Sara gets all angry and closed-minded whenever Norbert mentions the fairies, just like when he tries to tell her about her glowing-hand power...if she didn't want to admit to having power, she wouldn't want to admit to being a fairy, either. Third, everyone knows that fairies are really cold, cranky, and aloof, just like good ol' Sara. Fourth, Sara would look pretty darn sexy as a fairy!

Born in Santa Cruz/therefore most likely related to Iago,
Tristan Pirtle
Murfreesboro, TN

Dear Sam,

Could you make Sara a TINY bit nicer to look at? I mean, I know she's no glamor gal, but even the bums in your books manage a little "Sam Kieth Artistic Coolness." The Charlie-Brown-Receding-Hairline-Surprised/Mortified look is good for effect, but I think you've been falling back on it a little too often, lately.

Your enduring fan,
Benjamin L. Ponsford
Nampa, ID

Uh-oh. He' cum da letters. He' cum da letters.

Dear Sam,

I started reading your book a couple months ago, buying it (I admit) mainly because I saw the show on MTV during an evening of captive channel surfing and thought it kicked serious ass. I see it as a true representation of society—more so, at least, than the typical comics you find—those that show woman either as perfect heroines or helpless victims of some dark force. It could easily make the comic book world kind of intimidating to a 16-yr-old chick. How am I supposed to be entertained by this beautiful cyberbabe with perfect legs saving the world with her breasts while I'm roaming Atlanta analyzing why someone dumped me or debating where my next piercing should go? You see what I'm saying? It's difficult to relate to many comic books—I can appreciate the art, but I can't get emotionally involved.

BRY GUY
San Jose, CA

With The Maxx, though, it's different. I feel like the red-haired Julie Winters, and not just because both our wardrobes consist mostly of bell-bottom jeans and tank tops. We have many similar experiences and buried fears in common. I identify with Julie's manic need to be independent, Sara's loneliness and isolation from "normal" people, and Maxx's feeling of, well, amnesia. Also, I don't think many people see this, but it seems to me that Gone has become a sort of vision of humanity, in that he is evil one moment, then a few comics later, he's Artie, the senile bum who uses talking bait.

May whatever is out there smile upon you,
Cat Odom
Lilburn, GA

Can I vote on where your next piercing should go?

Dear Mr. Kieth and all Maxx fans,

Sara's new look is great! She's more beautiful than ever, and her new hairdo is perfect! Her cap w/the goggles and her—GASP!—skirts are great, too. And that glowing hand! WOW! A piece of advice for Steve (and boy, I bet his Outback is wild):

get out of the house once a month, man, or yer DEAD! Anyway, Sara's great, and I think I'm beginning to like her more than Julia now that she's more grown up. My God! Is that possible? Yes, it is.

Why has there been so much hate mail in Maxx Traxx from fools complaining about the new changes in the Maxx lately? To me, the change is great! Troy Hill complains that the new Maxx isn't like the old one. Well, DUH! I do believe that's because this is Sara's Maxx, not Julia's? Besides, Horse Maxx has been with Sara since she was five years old, so of course her Maxx isn't going to be exactly like the old one. They are different spirit animals, after all! I think you should stop living in the past, Mr. Hill, and embrace the here and now.

What? Oh, Lordy, he's complaining about the exploding fairies not being like the Isz, too? I don't know about anyone else, but I LOVE those little pink guys! They're a real hoot! And cute as a button, too! The way they float up into the air and burst when they become dry (or don't get fed regularly)...HA!! And besides, as much as I like them, I feel that the whole black-and-white-Isz thing has run its course for now. And I think it's very cool to see a different version of the Isz, anyway. It makes me wonder what they'll look like in Mark Winters' Outback—and if you don't show us what his Outback looks like REAL SOON, Mr. Kieth, I'm going to...

Anyway, at least a six-foot horse isn't as strange as a six-foot rabbit—and Iago and his crew are, at least in my opinion, better villains than Mr. Gone. Don't get me wrong, I like him, but I just don't think he's "supervillain" material. His present status suits him PERFECTLY! He is now the thing he was meant to be. Anyone else agree, or am I just a grain of sand in a sea of people?

Regards,
Timothy Stark
Walterboro, SC

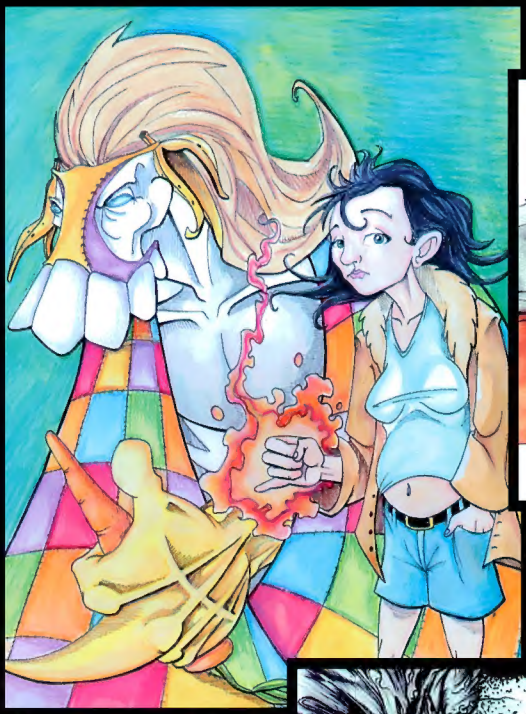
OK, NOW, THIS TIME FOR SURE!

NO MORE HOME ADDRESSES/PHONES NUMBERS FOR HEAD-TO-HEAD PENPALS

(OK for other sections of Head to Head, but we do recommend PO Boxes for everyone). Use E-mail or Post Office Boxes. (This applies to everyone who sent in a Penpal ad after September 1. If yours doesn't appear this month, and you sent it in around September I or after, please re-submit it, along with an e-mail or pobox number.)

PS/HOUSEKEEPING DETAILS WE GET ASKED ALL THE TIME: No subscriptions or retail sales available/sorry. Use "Head to Head" to find back issues/fan clubs/whatever (use the address in the indicia)/postcards are cheap and easy like us/WRITE LEGIBLY. No we don't print all the letters or art we get/too many/yes we do read them ALL/you might get answered or printed or edited/you might not/life's funny that way. B&w art has better chance of being published than color/can't return artwork/sorry. Keep 'em coming/the better the letters and submissions, the better the book! Oh yeah.

STEVEN SOENKSEN
Seward, NE



SAM CHAUMIN
Jacksonville, FL

SARAH CLARKE

WIL TOWLES
Richmond, VA